In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Say, "O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except God and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of God." But if they turn away, then say, "Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to God]." [Al Imran: 64]

Introduction: This study was born from a long personal journey with the sacred texts. I grew up hearing about “original sin” and “redemption by the cross” as givens, but when I returned to the Old Testament texts and the direct teachings of Jesus, I found a completely different picture of God: a merciful God who opens the door of repentance wide without the need for an intermediary or bloody sacrifice. This book is not an attack on anyone, but rather an invitation to return to the pure message of the prophets. I hope it will contribute to awakening the reader’s critical and spiritual thinking, and help them understand that God’s mercy is broader and simpler than some later doctrines have portrayed it.

In the depths of human experience, the question of forgiveness remains one of the most profound and pressing. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, and sin entered the world, and death has followed because of it, humanity has never ceased searching for a way to regain God’s favor and have the burden of transgression lifted. This question is not merely a theoretical theological inquiry, but the cry of every heart that recognizes its sinfulness and longs for peace with its Creator. The Old Testament offers one of the clearest and most powerful texts on this subject. In contrast to the common saying, “The fathers ate sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge,” God, through the prophet Ezekiel, declares the principle of absolute individual responsibility: “The soul who sins shall die.” Then He opens wide the door of hope, saying, “But if the wicked person turns from all the sins he has committed and keeps all My decrees and does

what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the offenses he has committed shall be remembered against him.” Here, the image of a merciful and just God is revealed, who does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked but rejoices in their repentance and life. However, the New Testament adds deeper and more complex dimensions. The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, speaks of “original sin,” saying, “Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people… so it was through the grace of one man that the world came to be.” The Apostle John, however, affirms that sin is "transgression" and "unbelief" in Christ, and proclaims that Jesus is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," and that confessing sin opens the door to complete forgiveness. Here, profound theological tensions arise that warrant careful consideration: Is repentance and turning away from evil, along with performing good deeds—as seems evident in the Old Testament and Ezekiel—sufficient to obtain complete forgiveness?

Or is sin deeper than that, an inherited condition that corrupts human nature, thus requiring complete external redemption performed by the "second man" (Christ)?

How do we understand Jesus' direct authority to forgive sins in the Gospels, given Paul's emphasis on justification by faith without works of the law?

And where does the mercy of God, proclaimed in the Old Testament, fit into the atonement of the cross in the New Testament?



These questions are not new; they have accompanied the Church since its inception, representing the fertile tension between the two Testaments, between justice and grace, and between humanity's capacity for repentance and its helplessness in the face of the depths of sin. This book aims to explore this

comparison with complete honesty and objectivity. We will first listen to the voice of the Old Testament within its historical and theological context, then move to the teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels, passing through the profound theological philosophy of Paul and the spiritual teachings of John, while considering the broad background of the Old Testament. We will not attempt to impose an artificial harmony, nor will we highlight contradictions in a destructive way. Rather, we will strive to understand each voice within its context, and then pose the fundamental question: How is the picture of forgiveness completed throughout the entire Bible? And what message does this multiplicity of voices offer to contemporary humanity, which is still searching for true forgiveness and inner renewal? The forgiveness of sins is not merely a doctrine; it is a living experience that shapes human destiny. Therefore, studying this topic is not merely academic research, but a spiritual journey toward the heart of God, who "takes no pleasure in the death of anyone," and who calls out to each one of us even today:

Chapter One:

Sin and Forgiveness in the Old Testament – Historical and Theological Background

The Story of Adam in Genesis 3 (Old Testament): Adam and Eve eat from the forbidden tree, and God confronts them.

Adam tries to shift the blame to Eve, and Eve to the serpent.

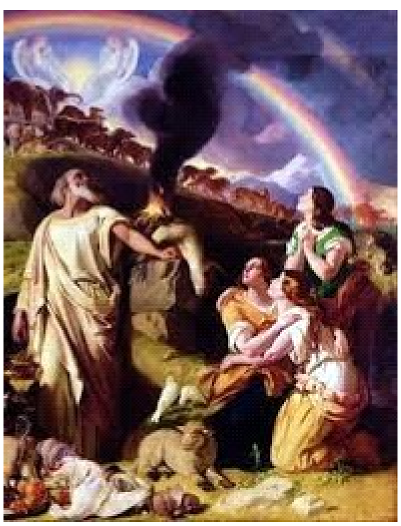
God declares the punishments (curses): the pain of childbirth for Eve, the toil and thorns of the earth for Adam, and physical death ("Dust you are, and to dust you shall return").

God expels them from the Garden of Eden lest they eat from the Tree of Life and remain in a state of sin. The only positive reference: "The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). Abel and Cain (known in the Torah as Cain and Abel) are mentioned in the Book of Genesis (Chapter 4). This story recounts the first human conflict, driven by jealousy, stemming from the rejection of one offering and the acceptance of the other. The details of the story in the Torah are as follows: Professions and Offerings: Cain was a farmer, working the land, while Abel was a shepherd. After some time, Cain offered a portion of the harvest as an offering to the Lord, and in return, Abel offered the firstborn of his flock (a blood sacrifice). Acceptance and Rejection: The Lord looked favorably upon Abel and his offering, but not upon Cain and his. According to the text, Cain was deeply offended and resentful. God spoke to him and rebuked him, warning him of the sin that lay in wait for him and urging him to do what was right. Cain did not heed the warning. Instead, he lured his brother Abel into the field one day, where he attacked and killed him. Punishment and Remorse: When God asked Cain about his brother's whereabouts, he replied that he did not know and that he was not responsible for him. So the Lord punished him by cursing the land, which would cease to yield its produce to him, and he was condemned to become a wanderer and a vagabond on the earth.Sin and Forgiveness: Humanity's Cry from Adam to the Present Day. Ever since Adam opened his eyes to this world after being expelled from Paradise, humanity has carried within its heart a single question that echoes through the generations: How can I regain the favor of my Creator? How can I erase the burden of sin that weighs me down? This question is not a philosophical luxury, but a profound existential cry. Every human being, regardless of their piety, knowledge, or status, knows deep down that they have sinned. Sin may seem small in the eyes of people, or it may be great, but ultimately, it separates the heart from God. From here began humanity's long journey in

search of forgiveness. In this chapter, we will return to the beginnings of the human story, not to recount it as it was told to us in childhood, but to view it through the eyes of a mature person who questions and engages with sacred texts. We will begin with the moment of the Fall, then move on to how God dealt with human sin in the Old Testament, and how this shaped our understanding of God's mercy and justice. First: The Moment of the Fall and What Followed. The Book of Genesis tells us that Adam and Eve ate from the tree that God had forbidden them to eat from. That moment was more than just disobeying a command; it was an attempt to become independent of God, an attempt for man to become “like a god, knowing good and evil.” As a result, death entered the world, and with it, misery, toil, and fear. But what is truly remarkable is God’s response. God did not immediately destroy Adam and Eve, nor did He curse them with an eternal, hopeless damnation. Instead, He called to them, questioned them, listened to their faltering apologies, and then clothed them with “garments of skin” (Genesis 21:3)—an early symbolic indication that God Himself covers human nakedness. Here, God’s mercy is evident from the very beginning. Yet, the question remains: Was Adam’s sin passed on to his descendants automatically, like genes? Or does each person face God with their own personal responsibility? Second: The principle of individual responsibility in the Old Testament. This question reaches its zenith in the teachings of the prophets. One of the most powerful texts affirming this principle is the statement of the prophet Ezekiel: “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father the iniquity of the son.” “The righteousness of the righteous will be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon him” (Ezekiel 20:18). This passage is not an exception, but rather an expression of the essence of God’s justice in the Old Testament. God does not punish one generation for the sins of the previous one. The prophet affirms that if the wicked repent of their wickedness, keep

God’s statutes, and do righteous deeds, “none of the offenses they have committed will be remembered against them, but by their righteousness they will live” (Ezekiel 21:18-22). This is not unique to Ezekiel. In the book of Isaiah we read: “Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon” (Isaiah 55:7). Likewise, in the books of Psalms, Proverbs, and the other prophets, we find dozens of texts that open the door of repentance wide, without any prior conditions, and without the need for a human intermediary or a great blood sacrifice. Sincere repentance + turning away from evil + doing good = complete forgiveness. Third: Is sin merely actions or an inherited condition? Here begins the tension that will dominate the rest of the book. While the Old Testament emphasizes individual responsibility, we find in some texts allusions to the depth of sin in the human heart. For example, David says, “I was born in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me” (Psalm 51:5). Or Jeremiah says, “The heart is more perverse than anything, and unclean; who can know it?” (Jeremiah 9:17). Do these texts mean that sin has become part of human nature? Or do they describe humanity’s strong inclination toward evil without making us guilty before we commit it? This is not a theoretical question. It defines the nature of our relationship with God. If sin is an inherited condition that corrupts our entire nature, then we need a radical, external solution. But if sin is actions and choices, then sincere repentance is sufficient because God “takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live.” Fourth: The experience of the prophets and the people of Israel throughout the history of the Old Testament reveals a recurring pattern: the people sin → are punished → repent → are forgiven. This pattern is repeated with Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, and with the Israelites in exile and their return. God did not wait for his Son's sacrifice to forgive; rather, he forgave whenever the people returned with contrite

hearts. This does not negate the importance of sacrifices, but the Old Testament itself repeatedly affirms that sacrifices without repentance are ineffective: “A broken spirit is the sacrifice of God; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17). Chapter Conclusion: An Invitation to Reflection. Our journey through this book will not be easy. We will encounter texts that sometimes seem contradictory. But we will try not to shy away from this tension, but to experience it honestly. Modern man, like ancient man, still seeks true forgiveness. Is repentance and returning to God, as the prophets preached, enough? Or does he need something greater? This is the question we will carry with us into the following chapters: the voice of Jesus in the Gospels, then the voice of Paul, and then an attempt to understand the complete picture.The story of Noah and the sacrifice of the goat (or offerings) after the flood in the Bible (Genesis): After the flood ended and Noah, his family, and the animals left the ark, Noah went down to Earth and did the following: “Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and took some of every clean animal and some of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings on the altar. The Lord was pleased with the aroma…” (Genesis 8:20-21)



In the Carthaginian (Phoenician) civilization, Carthage (a Phoenician colony in North Africa) was one of the most famous civilizations to practice human sacrifice, especially child sacrifice, as a means of atonement, redemption, and appeasing the gods. The tophet was an open-air sacred site dedicated to sacrifices, where tens of thousands of jars (more than 20,000 in Carthage alone) containing the burnt bones of children (infants and young children), along with some animals (especially lambs as substitutes), have been discovered.



The deities worshipped were Baal Hammon and Tanit. Sacrifices were offered to them to answer prayers or during times of crisis (wars, famines, disasters). The purpose was to atone for collective sins, appease angry gods, or fulfill a vow (such as "If we survive the war, we will offer a child"). These sacrifices were called Molk or Mlk sacrifices. Evidence: Inscriptions on stone stelae. (stelae) written in Punic, such as: “To our goddess Tanit… and to our lord Beel Hammon… because he heard his voice and blessed him.” This practice was considered an extreme form of proxy redemption, where a (fair) child was offered as a ransom for the parents or the entire city. Roman and Greek historians (such as Diodorus Siculus) described it harshly, and it corresponds to what the Old Testament says about child sacrifices to Molech in Canaan. A quick comparison with the monotheistic view: In these pagan civilizations, atonement relied on external rituals, sacrifices (even human ones), and magic.

A significant role for priests and intermediaries.

The focus was on appeasing multiple gods or maintaining cosmic balance.

In the Old Testament and Islam, human sacrifices are completely rejected, and emphasis is placed on heartfelt repentance and direct divine mercy. God Almighty said:

“Say, O My servants who have transgressed against

themselves…" Do not despair of the mercy of God. Indeed, God forgives all sins." (Az-Zumar 39:53)

Chapter Two Title: Jesus' Authority to Forgive Sins: The Image of a Merciful God in the Gospels. After examining the image of God in the Old Testament—a just and merciful God who opens the door of repentance wide and rejoices in the return of the sinner—we now turn to the heart of the New Testament: the person of Jesus Christ and his direct teaching. While the Old Testament proclaims the principle "the soul who sins shall die" with the hope of repentance, Jesus comes to embody this mercy in a living and direct way, exercising the authority of forgiveness through his words and deeds. First: Jesus and Sinners—Encounters that Became Testimonies. One of the most striking aspects of the Gospels is that Jesus did not require sinners to offer a sacrifice, mediator, or make a complex confession before forgiving them. It was enough for them to... They come to him with broken hearts. In the Gospel of Matthew (9:2-7), we see a paralyzed man brought to Jesus. Jesus did not say to him, "Go first and offer a sacrifice, or wait for the redemption to come." Instead, he looked at him and said, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." The scribes were astonished and said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Jesus answered with his authority, "So that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." Then he healed the paralytic before their very eyes. Another, more powerful example: the woman caught in adultery (John 8:3-11). The Pharisees brought her to test Jesus. The law required that she be stoned. But Jesus said, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Then he turned to her and said, "Woman, where are they who accused you? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on do not sin again." Also." Here we see clearly:

forgiveness is direct, free, and linked to repentance (“Sin no more.”). There is no mention of an inherited original sin requiring future bloody redemption, nor is there a condition of professing a particular doctrine. It is enough to encounter Christ and turn away from sin. Second: The Parable of the Prodigal Son — The Heart of God the Father. Perhaps the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 11:15-32) is the greatest expression of Jesus’ concept of forgiveness. The son took his inheritance, went to a distant country, spent his money on adultery and debauchery, and then returned repentant, saying, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” What did the Father do? He did not wait for him to offer atonement.

He did not send an intermediary.

But he saw him from afar, “and had compassion on him, and ran, and fell upon his neck and kissed him.”



Then he commanded that a great feast be made, saying, “For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.”

This parable reflects the image of God we saw in Ezekiel:

“I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather in their turning from their ways and their lives.” The joy in heaven is not due to sacrifice, but to repentance. Third: Jesus’ Concept of Sin. Jesus was not naive in his view of sin. Rather, he strongly warned against it: “Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

“Evil comes from the heart” (Mark 7:21-23).

“Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

However, at the same time, he did not describe sin as a state of “complete spiritual death” in which it is impossible for a person to repent without prior divine intervention. He called people directly to repentance: “Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). He praised simple faith and sincere repentance, as he did with Zacchaeus the tax collector (Luke 19), who said, “Look, Lord! Half of my possessions I give to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.” Jesus replied, “Today salvation has come to this house.” Fourth: Tension with Future Pauline Theology. Here begins the theological tension we mentioned in the introduction: Jesus forgives sins immediately by his personal authority.

Paul, in Romans, speaks of Adam’s original sin and the need for justification through faith in the crucified Christ.

How do we understand this?

Was Jesus forgiving “temporarily” pending the cross? Or was his authority to forgive complete and final?

Why didn’t Jesus explicitly refer to “original sin” in the Gospels, as Augustine and Paul later understood it? Did Jesus’ teaching of immediate mercy require a profound theological “correction” or “supplementation” from Paul? These are not easy questions, nor should they be answered hastily. The Gospels show Jesus living and teaching before the crucifixion. He was sending his disciples to preach repentance and forgiveness even before he was crucified (Luke 9-10). This calls for deep reflection: Was forgiveness possible before the cross? And if so, what was the precise role of the cross? Chapter Conclusion: Jesus Opens the Door. Jesus did not come to close the door of mercy opened by the prophets, but to widen it. He said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 28:11). He did not say, “Come after I die.” He called them immediately. Our study of this topic requires us to be honest: to listen first to the voice of Jesus as recorded in

the Gospels, before turning to the interpretation of the Apostle Paul. The priority in the Bible must be given to the word of the Lord himself. In the next chapter we will move to the world of the Apostle Paul — the world of “one man,” “grace,” and “redemption by blood” — trying to understand how this theology came about, and how it can coexist with the image of a merciful God that we have seen in the Old Testament and in the teaching of Jesus.



Paul

ine Theological Philosophy: The First and Second Man — The Depth of Sin and the Mystery of Redemption. Having contemplated in the Old Testament the image of a just and merciful God who directly accepts the repentance of the sinner, and having considered the authority of Jesus Christ in forgiving sins as revealed in the Gospels—a direct, free authority, linked to repentance and faith—we now arrive at a new and profound stage in our journey: the theology of the Apostle Paul. It was Paul who gave Christian doctrine its organized theological form, especially on the subject of sin and salvation. His teachings became central to most churches, and they developed the concept of “original sin” and “redemption by the cross” into its classical form. But this development was not without tension with what came before. First: Who was Paul and what was his background? Saul of Tarsus (Paul) was a strict Pharisee, well-versed in the Law, who fiercely persecuted the early Christians. Then a dramatic encounter on the road to Damascus completely changed his course. He then became the greatest preacher of the Gospel to the Gentiles. Paul writes his letters from the perspective of someone who lived the full force of religious experience: the Law, which reveals sin, human helplessness in the face of it, and then the surpassing grace of God. For this reason, his writings are characterized by philosophical and theological depth and a precise analysis of human nature. Secondly, sin for Paul is not merely actions, but a state of being. In his letter to the Romans, especially chapter 5, Paul presents a comprehensive view: “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—for even to those who did not sin in the manner of Adam’s transgression… as judgment came to all people through

one unrighteousness, so also through one righteousness came life to all people. For as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous” (Romans 12:5-19). Here, Paul sees Adam not merely as the first person, but as a representative human head. When Adam sinned, all of humanity sinned through him. Sin is not merely an individual act, but an inherited condition that corrupts human nature from birth. The result is spiritual and physical death.

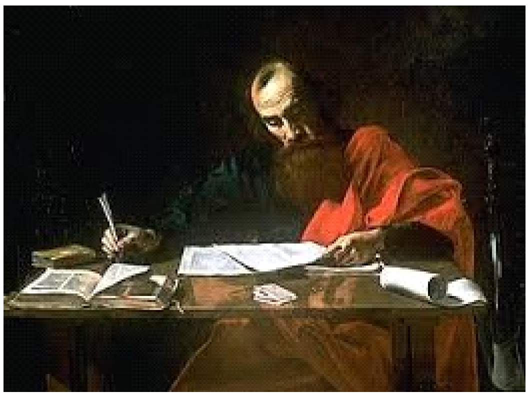
Humanity is unable to justify itself through the Law.

There is a natural inclination toward sin (“My flesh is sold under sin”—Romans 7).

This analysis explains—in Paul’s view—why even the best among us fail to attain God’s perfection through their own efforts. Third: Paul’s solution—redemption through the cross. If the first man (Adam) brought about death and judgment, then the “second man” (Christ) brought about life and justification: “For since death came through a man, it is also through a man that the resurrection of the dead comes” (1 Corinthians 21:15). The cross is not merely a moral example or a prophetic martyrdom, but a universal redemptive event. Jesus bore our sins on our behalf and died in our place, thus providing complete atonement. Then He rose victorious over death and sin. Paul says, “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Romans 4:25). And, “By grace you have been saved through faith, and

this is not from yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). Herein lies the great difference: In the Old Testament and the Gospels: repentance + faith → direct forgiveness.

With Paul: faith in the crucified Christ → free justification, because man is powerless on his own.



Fourth: Tensions and Difficult Questions. This Pauline theology raises profound questions that demand honest reflection: Does it contradict the Old Testament?

How do we reconcile “the soul who sins shall die” (Ezekiel) with the fact that death came to all because of Adam’s single sin?

What is the place of Jesus’ teaching?

Jesus forgave sins just before the crucifixion. Was this forgiveness “temporary” or “preemptive,” awaiting redemption on the cross? Or was his authority absolute in itself?

Grace and Works. Paul strongly asserts that a person is justified by faith without works of the law. But Jesus himself said, “If you love me, keep my commandments” and “whoever does the will of my Father in heaven” (Matthew 21:7). How do we understand this balance?

The Image of God. Does God need a “bloody atonement” to forgive? Or is the cross an expression of God’s infinite love and not a legal requirement?

Paul himself acknowledges the profound mystery of this, saying, “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Romans 11:33). Chapter Conclusion: An Invitation to Listen Humbly. Paul’s theology is not a rejection of what came before, but rather an attempt to explain the depth of the human problem after the resurrection of Christ. He sees in the cross the culmination of divine mercy: God did not ask of humanity what it could not do, but descended himself to accomplish salvation. Yet, the tension remains—a fertile tension that prompts us to reflect. Can the picture of forgiveness in the entire Bible be complete without silencing any voice? Can we retain God’s immediate mercy in the Old Testament and in the teachings of Jesus, along with the depth of Paul’s analysis of sin and grace? This is the challenge we will carry into the next chapter, where we will listen to the spiritual voice of the Apostle John and then attempt to paint a more complete picture of God’s forgiveness in the Bible.

Chapter Four: A Comparison Between the Two Testaments: The Picture of Forgiveness from Ezekiel to Paul. Having traversed three stages in our journey with the sacred texts, it is time to pause and reflect on the whole picture. In the first chapter, we contemplated the image of God in the Old Testament. In the second, we examined Jesus' direct authority in the Gospels. In the third, we delved into the depths of Pauline theology. This chapter brings these three threads together, summarizes them, and offers a systematic comparison between the Old and New Testaments on the subject of sin and forgiveness. We will not attempt to impose an artificial harmony, but rather we will honestly highlight the similarities, differences, and tensions. First: Summary of the three previous chapters. Chapter One – The Old Testament:

We saw God as a just and merciful God who clearly affirms the principle of individual responsibility ("The soul who sins shall die" – Ezekiel 18). Sin is not an inherited condition that irredeemably corrupts human nature, but rather actions and choices that a person can abandon through sincere repentance. God does not delight in the death of the wicked, but rejoices in their return. Repentance + turning away from evil + doing good = complete forgiveness without the need for external, bloody redemption. This pattern was repeated many times with the prophets and the people of Israel. Chapter Two – Jesus' Teaching in the Gospels:

We found Jesus exercising the direct authority of forgiveness. He forgave the paralytic, the woman caught

in adultery, Zacchaeus the tax collector, and the prodigal son. Forgiveness was free, immediate, and contingent upon repentance and faith. He did not ask sinners to wait for a future event (the cross), but forgave them instantly. Jesus emphasized the seriousness of sin (especially sin of the heart), but called for immediate repentance: "Repent and believe in the gospel." The parable of the prodigal son summarizes his vision: the Father runs to the repentant unconditionally. Chapter Three – The Theology of the Apostle Paul:

Paul offered a deeper analysis of the human problem. He saw in Adam a representative head of humanity, and thus sin entered everyone, along with death. Humanity became "sold under sin," incapable of justification by the law. His solution was substitute redemption through the crucifixion of Christ: the "second man" who died in our place, so that justification would be by grace through faith alone, not by works.Third: Key Points of Similarity and Difference: Both Testaments affirm God's holiness and His hatred of sin.

Both open wide the door of mercy.

Repentance is a fundamental condition in both Testaments.

God rejoices in the return of the sinner (Ezekiel = the parable of the prodigal son).

Faith in God and returning to Him is the heart of the religious experience.

The Book of Ezekiel

Chapter 18

1 The word of the Lord came to me:

2 “Why do you tell this proverb about the land of Israel, saying, ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’?

3 As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, you shall never again tell this proverb in Israel.

4 Behold, all life is Mine; the life of the father and the life of the son are both Mine.” The soul that sins shall die.

5 But the man who was righteous and did what was just and right,

6 who did not eat on the mountains or look to the idols of the house of Israel, who did not defile his neighbor’s wife or go near a woman during her menstrual period,

7 who did not oppress anyone, but returned to the debtor his pledge, who did not extort, but gave his bread to the hungry and clothed the naked,

8 who did not lend at interest or take profit, who refrained from injustice, and administered true justice between man and man,

9 who walked in my statutes and kept my ordinances to do what was right—he is righteous; he shall surely live, declares the Sovereign Lord.

10 But if he fathers a son who is violent and a murderer, and he does any of these things,

11 but does not do any of them, but eats on the mountains and defiles his neighbor’s wife,

12 and oppresses the poor and needy, extorts, does not return the pledge, looks to idols and does abominations,

13 lends at interest and takes profit—will he surely live? He who has committed all these abominations shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself.

14 If he begets a son who sees all the sins his father has committed, and sees them, and does not do likewise,

15 who does not eat on the mountains, nor look to the idols of the house of Israel, nor defile his neighbor’s wife,

16 who does not oppress anyone, nor take a pledge, nor rob, but gives his bread to the hungry, and clothes the naked,

17 who withholds his hand from the poor, and does not take interest or usury, but keeps my laws and walks in my statutes, then he shall not die for his father’s iniquity; he shall surely live.

18 But his father, because he oppressed unjustly, and robbed his brother, and did what was not right among his people, behold, he shall die for his iniquity.

19 And you say, “Why should the son not bear the iniquity of the father?” But the son has done what is just and right; he has kept all my statutes and observed them; he shall surely live.

20 The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father bear the iniquity of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon

himself.

21 But if the wicked person turns from all the sins he has committed and keeps all My statutes and does what is just and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

22 None of the offenses he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness he has done, he shall live.

23 “Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?” declares the Sovereign Lord. “Rather, I take no pleasure in his turning from his ways, that he may live.”

24 But if the righteous person turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity and does as the wicked person does, will he live? None of the righteousness he has done shall be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness he has committed and the sin he has committed, he shall die.

25 “And you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not right.’ Now hear, O house of Israel: Is My way not right?” Are not your ways unjust?

26 If a righteous person turns from their righteousness and commits iniquity and dies in it, they will die because of the iniquity they have committed.

27 But if a wicked person turns from the wickedness they have done and does what is just and right, they will surely live.

28 They will see and turn from all the transgressions they have committed, and they will surely live; they will not die.

29 Yet the house of Israel says, “The way of the Lord is not just. Are my ways unjust, O house of Israel? Are not your ways unjust?”

30 Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to their own ways, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, and let not iniquity destroy you.

31 Cast away all the transgressions you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. Why should you die, O house of Israel?

32 For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign Lord. Turn and live!Points of Difference and Tension: Depth: The Old Testament focuses on sin as an act, while Paul sees it as an inherited, universal condition.

Mediator: The Old Testament presents direct repentance to God. The New Testament (especially Paul's) establishes Christ as the sole mediator and redemption as essential.

Time: Jesus forgives before the crucifixion, while Paul sees the crucifixion as the foundation of universal forgiveness.

Grace and Effort: The Old Testament and the Gospels combine God's mercy with human effort, while Paul tends to strongly emphasize free grace.

Fourth: How do we understand this tension? This tension is not a deficiency, but a richness. The Old Testament lays the foundation: God is merciful and just, and repentance is possible. Jesus embodies and expands this mercy. Paul explains why repentance has always required divine grace and how the crucifixion is the perfect expression of God's love, which has been at work from the beginning. In short: The Old Testament proclaims God's desire for forgiveness.

Jesus demonstrates God's authority to forgive.

Paul explains the depth and divine cost of this forgiveness.

Modern man needs all these voices: he needs God’s immediate mercy, the authority of Christ, and the depth

of grace that surpasses human effort. Chapter Conclusion: Towards a Complete Picture. The forgiveness of sins is not merely a theological theory, but a lived experience. The Old Testament says, “Return to me, and I will return to you.” Jesus says, “Come to me.” And Paul says, “Grace is sufficient.” In the following chapters, we will listen to the voice of the Apostle John, then attempt to paint a more complete picture of God’s mercy, and ask: What message does this multiplicity offer to man today who seeks true forgiveness and inner renewal?

First: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” The Gospel of John begins with this awe-inspiring declaration by John the Baptist: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). This phrase carries rich dimensions: The Lamb: a reference to the Passover sacrifice and to the suffering servant of the Lord in Isaiah 53. Takes away the sin of the world: not only the sins of Israel, but the sin of the whole world. Here, a cosmic expansion transcends the narrow Jewish perspective.

John sees in Jesus the perfect sacrifice that accomplishes what previous sacrifices could not. But he doesn't stop at the bloody aspect; he connects it to light and life. Secondly, John's concept of sin: In his first epistle, John gives a clear definition: "Everyone who sins breaks the law, and sin is breaking the law" (1 John 4:3). "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves" (1 John 8:1). But John doesn't succumb to pessimism. He offers an immediate and practical solution: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse

us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 9:1). "My dear children, I am writing these things to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one" (John 1:1). He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2). Here we see a beautiful combination: confession (repentance) + the mediator (Jesus) + atonement (sacrifice).

Third: Light and Darkness—John’s Spiritual Vision. John presents sin as “darkness” and forgiveness as “light”: “The light shone in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it” (John 5:1).

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 12:8). For him, sin is not merely a violation of the law, but a rejection of light, a rejection of truth, a rejection of love. Salvation is faith in this light: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 16:3). This verse is perhaps the most famous in the Bible, and it summarizes John’s vision: forgiveness springs from God’s love, not merely from a legal transaction. Fourth: Contrasts and Harmony with Previous Voices. How does John’s voice fit with the above? With the Old Testament: John draws heavily on the image of a merciful God. Confession of sin leads to immediate forgiveness (1 John 9:1), similar to “Return to me, and I will return to you.”

With Jesus in the Gospels: John (Jesus’ beloved disciple) affirms the authority of immediate forgiveness but adds the atoning dimension (the lamb, atonement).

With Paul: He agrees with Paul on the importance of atonement and grace but focuses less on “original sin” and more on the personal relationship with Christ and love.

John appears as a bridge: he combines Paul's theoretical depth with Jesus' personal warmth, adding a spiritual and contemplative dimension. Fifth: Love is the essence. John's greatest statement is, "God is love" (1 John 4:8).

Forgiveness is not merely a legal solution to the problem of sin, but an expression of God's paternal love. The cross is the culmination of this love, not simply the payment of a debt. "This is how God showed his love for us: He sent his one and only Son into the world, that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9). Chapter Conclusion: John's voice calls us to balance. John's voice reminds us that forgiveness is not just a complex theory, nor merely superficial repentance, but a personal encounter with Christ—the light of the world, the Lamb of God, our Advocate, and our Atonement. He tells us: Confess your sin, believe in the One who loved you and gave Himself for you, and you will find light, purification, and eternal life. Thus, we have listened to the key voices in the Bible: the Old Testament, Jesus, Paul, and John. In the next chapter (the conclusion), we will attempt to paint a complete picture of these voices and pose the

fundamental question: What message does this diversity offer to contemporary humanity, which seeks genuine forgiveness and a living relationship with God?

Chapter Six Title: The Old Testament Is Right: A Return to the Pure Message. After a long journey through the sacred texts, and after listening fairly to the voices of the Old Testament, the authority of Jesus in the Gospels, the theology of Paul, and the spirituality of John, it is time to confront the fundamental question we posed from the beginning: Who is right? With complete honesty and objectivity, and after careful reflection on the texts themselves, we can confidently say: The Old Testament is right in its fundamental view of God, of sin, and of the path to forgiveness. This is not a rejection of the entire New Testament, but rather a distinction between the original pure message and the later theological interpretations that have added unnecessary complexity.

Larbi Hassan

May 2026